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2006 Bethsaida Field Report

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UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA

BETHSAIDA EXCAVATIONS PROJECT

THE SEASON OF 2006

FIELD REPORT

RAMI ARAV



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The Expedition

The excavation season of 2006 extended over 9 weeks from May 21 to July 21. The following staff, faculty and students took part in the excavations:

Director of Excavations Dr. Rami Arav (University of Nebraska at Omaha [UNO]),
Project Director Dr. Richard Freund (Hartford University),
Assistant Director Dr. Carl Savage (Drew University),
Co-Director Dr. Elizabeth McNamer (Rocky Mountain College, Billings MT),
Co-Director Dr. Nicolae Roddy (Creighton University),
Co-Director Dr. John T. Greene (Michigan State University)
Co-Director Prof. Dr. Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn and Dr. Steffi Keim (University of Munich),
Archivist and Coordinator Stephen Reynolds (UNO),
Photographer Christine Dalenta (University of Hartford)
Photographer Hanan Shafir
Assistant to director Eran Nevo (Haifa University)
Conservation Orna Cohen
Anthropologist Issa Sarie (Hebrew University),
Maha Darawsha (University of Connecticut)
Numismatics Dr. Aryeh Kindler (Tel Aviv),
Dr. Gordon Brubacher (Messiah College)
Dr. Aaron Gale (West Virginia University),
Shai Schwartz Field Data Recorder,

Other experienced people and long time supporters of the project are:

Judith Schwartz, Barney Tram, Kelen and Emmit Wilson, and Reggie Bollich.

The expedition was accommodated, as in previous years, in Kibbutz Ginosar. We are very grateful for Katy Bar-Nof, and her dedicated team that made our stay in Ginosar greatly enjoyable.

Excavations

AREA A

Excavations in Area A concentrated in four different areas. The purpose was to learn more about the road approaching the city dating from Stratum 5 and tombs excavated into it dating from Stratum 2, Stratum 6 city gate and west of the city gate which is now called Area A West.

Stratum 2

Two empty tombs were discovered in square P 46 and a small tomb in P 51,52 which was found empty, too.

Stratum 5

The cobble stone road:

Loci 1750, 1751

These two loci were excavated on the continuation of the cobble stone road approaching the city. The excavations reveal that the cobble stones follow the outer city wall to a distance of about 25.5 m. from the outer city gate, and then depart from it and turn east. GPR tests revealed that the cobble stones will continue for the next 25 m. and there it should stop.

Finds: The road was paved in the 9th century BCE, and had been in use until the 4th century CE. However, pottery finds on the road include shards from all periods. Early Bronze Age combed ware, Iron Age II pottery, Cypro-Phoenician shards, Hellenistic

shards of Rhodian wine amphorae, fine ware, and a small fragment of Apullean pottery. A special find in this locus was an iron chisel measuring 6 cm.



The paved road leading to the outer city gate.

Stratum 6

The area between the city walls, near the tower of square N 46.

Loci 1753, 1754

The area between the tower in square N 46/47 and the outer city wall was excavated in order to find the outer face of the city wall and to clear the foot of the tower. The excavations revealed that at the northern wall of the tower there is a set of a few stones parallel to the construction of the wall and serve either as a foundation for the tower or a bench for offering. In the corner next to it there was another stele embedded in the ground. It is very severely mutilated and only the core of the stele has been preserved.

Finds: Pottery finds indicate that the locus has a mixture of shards dating from the Early Bronze Age to the medieval period. However, most shards date from Iron Age IIa. There are shards of cooking pots with a very pronounced ledge below the folded rim, indicating an early date in Iron Age IIa.



Locus 1753, notice the floor reaching the face of wall W403. The sloping floor on which the scale is posted reaches the northern face of the wall W403.



A section looking south, the sloping floor can clearly be seen above some broken red bricks, and a thicker floor is seen below the scale.

The Façade of the Outer City Wall

Loci: 1757, 1758, 1760, 1762, 1763

This section revealed some unexpected finds. The eastern wing of the façade of the outer city gate was not found to be a in straight line with the western wing but it creates a niche of about 1.25 m. off this line. This niche recedes to 1.45 m. from the corner of the gate and continues the line of the wall connecting the outer city wall with the bastion (W855). It means that this wall (W855) is 6 m. wide and 29 m. long.

The floor of this area inclines towards the east and continues this inclination, observed in the section inside the outer gate, east of wall W403. The floor is made of very hard compact dirt. It was assumed that it constitutes an open drainage canal. The inclined floor is cut by a higher level compact dirt floor which canceled the use of this system. The inclined floor touches the wall of W403 and excludes the possibility that W403 may have been built in this slope and cutting a presumed previous glacis. The pavement of Stratum 6 courtyard is in elevation of -172.77 which is only but 20 cm. above the lowest part of the slope.



The façade of the outer city gate looking east, the corner of the niche is seen in the picture.



The niche at the façade of the outer city gate



The glacis seen cut by locus 1758, which is the floor of the Stratum 6 city gate



Finds from locus 1758. Roman pottery is associated with the Roman tomb dug into Stratum 6.

Finds

A Roman period tomb was dug to the elevation below the floor, in fact, cutting the floor and reaches an elevation of -173.05 m. The finds contains a large amount of Hellenistic and Roman material. It includes Hellenistic globular cooking pots, jars and ETS, in addition to Iron Age II shards.

Sounding in Chamber 1

Locus: 1752

Excavations in this chamber removed 2/3 of the entire floor. At the west side of the chamber, just east of the W319, a thick wall was found (W913). Similar to other constructions of Stratum 6, the wall was not constructed as well as the walls of Stratum 5. There are large spaces between the stones and many were rather loose. The face of the wall was not perfectly straight as the Stratum 5 walls. This wall perhaps connects to the rest of the walls of the stratum at the south with the walls that were found in the granary and in the west with the walls found near the sacrificial high place. This wall continues to the north and was found in probe excavations in Chamber 3.

Finds

Finds: Finds includes shards of pottery from Iron Age II. There were red slip and burnished shards, a few identified as 'Samaritan Ware', carinated bowls, fragments of basalt three-legged bowls, bichrome shards and perhaps Late Bronze pottery. A special find is an iron chisel.



Digging in Chamber 1. Locus 1752 is the top of the wall of Stratum 6.



Top of wall W913, Stratum 6. Notice that the face of the wall is deteriorated.



Shards from Locus 1752 include Early Bronze, Middle Bronze disc base, Late Bronze and Iron Age I, red cooking pot, and Iron Age IIA red slip and burnish. A shard with incisions is perhaps late and slipped down to this early level.



A clay bead.

Locus 1759

Two possible walls parallel to each other cut the chamber below W913 and date perhaps to Stratum 7. The shards of pottery that are associated with this locus are Iron Age IIa, a few Early Bronze shards appear as well. This locus seems to be made of filling into the area to level it for the construction of Stratum 6 and wall W913.

Sounding in Chamber 3

Locus 1761

The area selected for sounding in Chamber 3 was made in order to see whether wall W913 that was discovered in Chamber 1 continues to Chamber 3. After three days of excavations the top of a wall was discovered. Only two stones were found thus far but they are lying flat and in the same direction of the wall in Chamber 1.

Apparently there is no passage through this wall which means that the four chamber city gate from Stratum 5 does not continue a former gate from the previous stratum. It is therefore, unknown how the approach to the city was made during Stratum 6.

Finds: Pottery shards include:

Iron Age II cooking pots and jars, Middle Bronze Age IIb Yahudiyeh type.



Locus 1761

Area A West

This area is located west of the city gate. This area has been excavated in order to retrieve more material dating from the Hellenistic-Roman period next to the temple and in order to study the Iron Age remains from this area.

Stratum 2

Locus 2005

This locus began in 2005 and is defined by walls in three directions. W 910 at the east, W907 at the north, and W905 at the south. The locus contained soft material in which many bones and Hellenistic and Roman pottery appear and thick plaster floor.

Finds

Among the finds are ETS pottery, Hellenistic Athenian black glazed pottery shards and shards of oil lamps, Hellenistic jars and Rhodian amphora shards, and SWW pottery shards. The date of this locus is ascribed to Stratum 2 and dates from the Hellenistic period.

Locus 2007

This locus is situated in sq. H,I 53,54, east of wall W911. The locus contained infrastructure of small stones and pebbles. After photographing this locus it was removed.

Finds:

Finds include Hellenistic pottery shards, Black glazed known as “Appulian” ware, a coin, an iron short nail, and a glass bead.

Locus 2008

This locus is situated at the sq. I 53 it contained two bronze bowls, possibly paterae, found one within the other and were severely deteriorated. They were taken for reconstruction.

Locus 2009

Located at sq. H.53, it is a small pit confined with a ring of stones. The locus contained ashes and Hellenistic pottery shards among which are Spattered Washed Ware (SWW), a Hellenistic amphoriskos and a flint hammer.

Locus 2011

Located at sq. G 53/54 west of wall W911, it contained a hard packed surface and debris.

Finds

Finds contain Hellenistic shards an ETS bowl, bones and round basalt stones, and a basalt grinding stone.

Locus 2012

Located at H53/54 it is the locus that continues Locus 2007. It contains loose stones and fragments of the sub-floor.

Finds

Finds contain Hellenistic pottery shards, black glazed Athenian shards, decorated Hellenistic pottery, ETS, grinding stones and a large amount of bones.

Locus 2013

Located at H,I 53, 54, east of wall W911, this locus yielded a compact dirt floor, mud bricks and ash.

Finds

Finds include a bronze spatula and a mixture of Hellenistic and Iron Age pottery.

Locus 2014

Located at sq. H53 north of Locus 2013, this locus contained a layer of ash mud bricks and hard lime surface.

Finds

Finds contained Hellenistic shards of pottery among which there are shards of unguentaria, Tyrian jar handles and cooking pots. Iron Age II pottery was also found in a small quantity.

Locus 2015

Located at sq. F54 this locus is essentially a pit containing soft material, many bones and not so much pottery.

Finds

Iron Age III shards of oil lamp and mixed pottery of Iron Age and Hellenistic.

Locus 2016

Located at G/F 53/54, this locus started with loose soil which looked like a pit in the east end of the Locus 2005. This soft material continued all over the square and the locus was extended to all over the area lower than locus 2005. Large flat stones were discovered at the bottom of the locus and may constitute stratum 6.

Finds

Hundreds of bones were found in this locus together with Hellenistic and Iron Age II pottery. Among the special finds were an oil lamp, a 3 cm bead and a fragment of a limestone cosmetic bowl decorated with incisions on the rim were preserved.





Finds from Locus 2016, notice the limestone cosmetic bowl in the upper left hand side

Stratum 2020

Located at H54 this locus is a Hellenistic/Roman pit containing shards of Hellenistic globular cooking pots and other Hellenistic shards together with many bones and a piece of Hellenistic 'glass on core' bearing yellow, white and blue colors.

Finds

Shards of Hellenistic globular cooking pots

Shards of Rhodian wine amphorae

A piece of 'glass on core' in multiple colors of yellow, white, and blue

Stratum 5

Loci in this stratum were excavated in order to examine the area extended west of the city gate and in the continuation of the main thoroughfare. The floor was made of compact dirt and only segments were found. Although most finds date to the Hellenistic period, it should be ascribed to the Four Chamber City Gate (Stratum 5) based mainly on the level of the segments of the floor which are at the elevation of -168.5

Locus 2017

Located at H53 east of wall W911 under Locus 2014, this locus was designated to discover the area west of the 4 chamber city gate.

Finds

Most finds were Iron Age shards mixed with Hellenistic Roman pottery of a pit which was not exactly defined at the time of the dig. A clinker was also discovered. Among the Hellenistic pottery there were Rhodian wine amphorae and Tyrian jar handles. In addition to that there were many bones. Among the Iron Age pottery there were three legged perforated cups, stoppers and red slip and burnished pottery typical to Iron Age IIA.

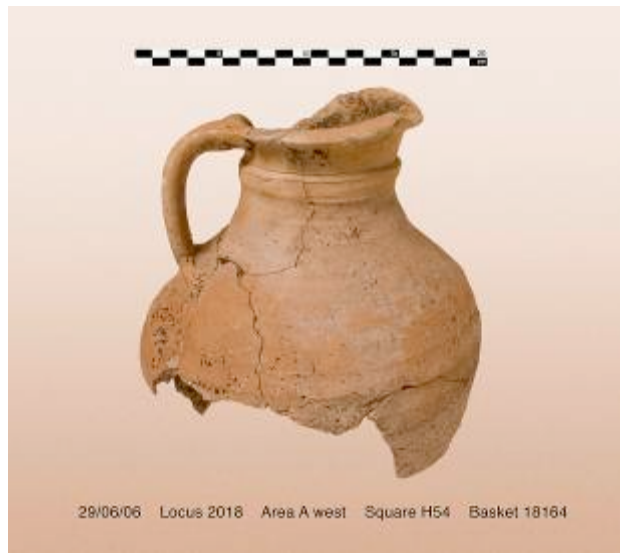
Locus 2018

Located at H 53/54 and below Locus 2017. This is the elevation of the passageway of the Four Chamber City Gate and special care was given to this area in

order to trace the nature of this place during Stratum 5. Apparently there was a Hellenistic/Roman pit dug into this area that was not discerned during the dig.

Finds

Since the locus presents mixed Hellenistic/Roman pottery of together with Iron Age II material, it is assumed that a pit was excavated into this area that could not be traced during the dig. The pit includes a complete Roman Spattered Washed Ware and other Hellenistic Roman shards, a lead weight and a coin. Iron Age II shards were also discovered and a large portion of a bovine skeleton, which dates perhaps to the conquest of the city in 732 BCE.



Locus 2019

Located at F,G 55, 54 and below Locus 2015 and Locus 2016. The level of this area indicates that it is one meter below the passageway of the Four Chamber City Gate. Large stones were discovered at the north part of the locus and it may form remains of Stratum 6. The finds, however, indicate that Hellenistic and Roman pits were excavated into this area and mixed the Iron Age II material of Stratum 5. The large stones of what seems to be Stratum 6 cover the entire locus. A thick gray layer disturbed in many places indicates the floor level of Stratum 5. It has been found mostly disturbed by Hellenistic Roman excavations.

Finds

Most of the material was found to be a mixture of Hellenistic and Iron Age II shards. A fragment of a shell, perhaps of the famous murex type, was found in this locus.



Locus 2021

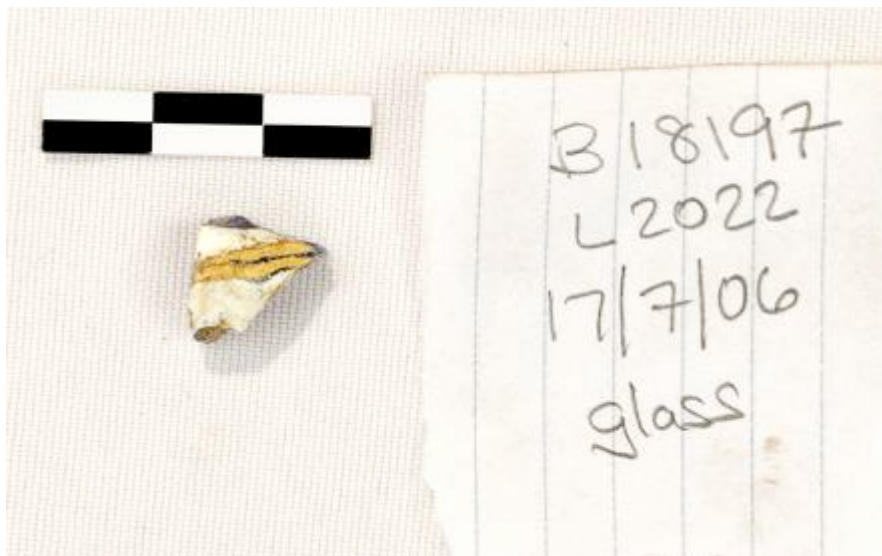
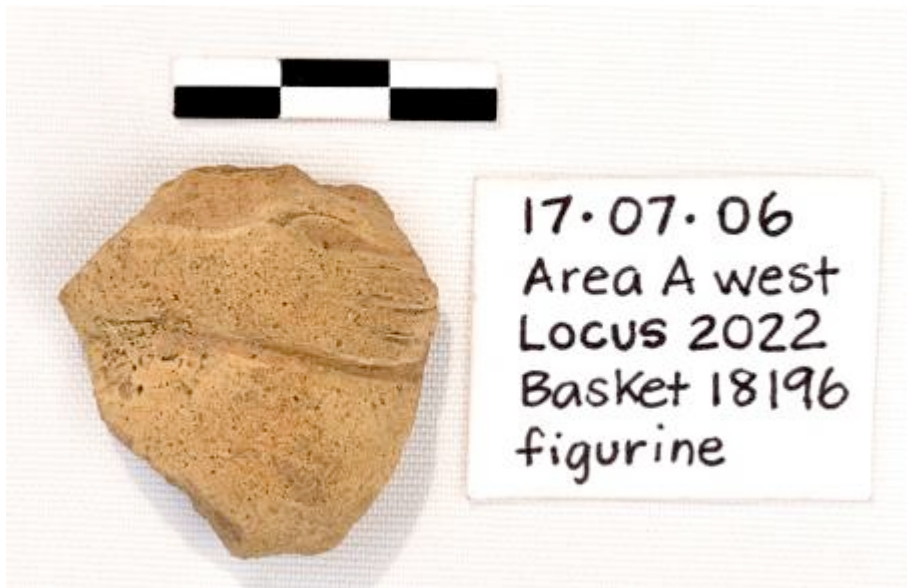
Located at F/G 53/54 this locus is a balk in SE of Locus 2019 where the pit was removed. The finds include bones and Iron Age II shards.

Locus 2022

Located at G 53, 54 this locus marks the removal of the north-south wall W911 and the pavement west of the wall. This job lasted three days. Under the wall there was loose soil and debris, and under this layer there was a hard layer with stones.

Finds

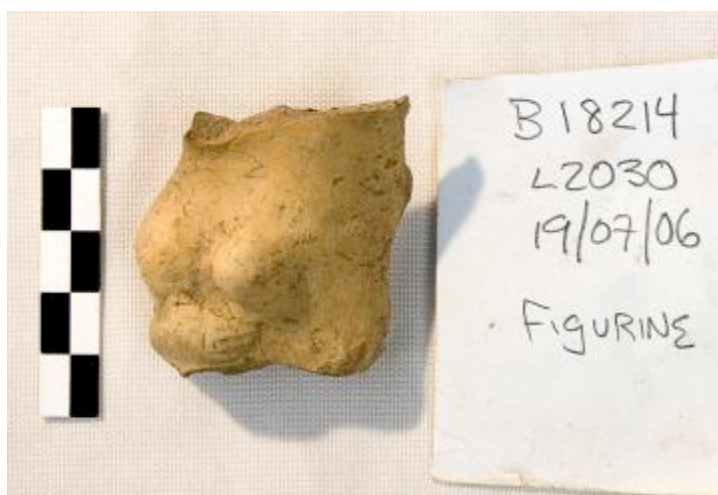
Finds include Hellenistic pottery shards of painted decorated ware, unguentaria, a shard of Hellenistic glass, together with a few Iron Age pottery shards. A bronze fibula, and a Hellenistic pottery figurine of a pregnant woman holding her abdomen.



Finds from Locus 2022

Locus 2030

Located at G 53 and consists of a Hellenistic/Roman pit excavated in the north of Locus 2022. Among the finds there was another figurine of a pregnant lady holding her abdomen, similar to the one found in Locus 2022 and an iron knife.



Stratum 6

Loci 2027, 2026.

Remains of Stratum 6 were excavated at the east end of the Area A West. They consist of one more chamber of the granary Locus 2026. The size of the chamber is 3.3 m X 2 m. A wall of 1.4 m., W912, marks the end of this chamber. Another wall W914 was found running E-W direction from W912.

Locus 2027 is located west of W912 and is perhaps outside of the granary.



AREA C

Excavations in Area C were aimed to collect more data on the residential quarter at the north east section of the mound. The excavations thus far have revealed the remains of a house north of a paved lane. The house contains a spacious courtyard measuring 9 X 4 m. which was accessed from the southwest and from the north. The floor of the courtyard contained an oven at the north part, pottery shards, oil lamps and a complete fish bowl of the type Spattered Wash Ware. At the north of the house there was a cellar

with a few broken jars. The cellar is built by large slabs covering three subterranean walls. West of the cellar there is a beginning of another room with an entrance at the east. No entrance was discerned from the courtyard to the northern space. This area contained a few iron objects, knives, nails and a silver coin in fine condition.

Locus 563

This locus is located at sq. B26 north of the paved lane. The locus is only a segment of the entire room. This site has revealed plenty of Hellenistic shards.

Locus 567

Is located at sq. 25C and consists of the northern section of a courtyard. The house to which this locus belongs was abandoned in haste around the end of the second century BCE, possibly as a result of the Hasmonean conquest, and many articles were left inside. They include a Spattered Washed Ware “fish bowl”, oil lamps and cooking pots.



Locus 569

Located at sq. C,D, 25 this locus marks the southern section of the courtyard. Finds include an iron nail, a small silver coin, perhaps a Tyrian Obol, a decorated handle, shards of casseroles and Rhodian wine amphora.

Locus 570, 5701

Located at sq. 25 C this locus began as 5701 and after the discovery of wall W668 it was split into two loci of which 570 is the at the north of the wall and perhaps a different room or a building.

These loci revealed many finds among which there were fish lead net weights, a large iron blade resembling a butcher's knife, a long iron nail bent 90 degrees to fasten a wooden object and an iron pruning hook.

Locus 571

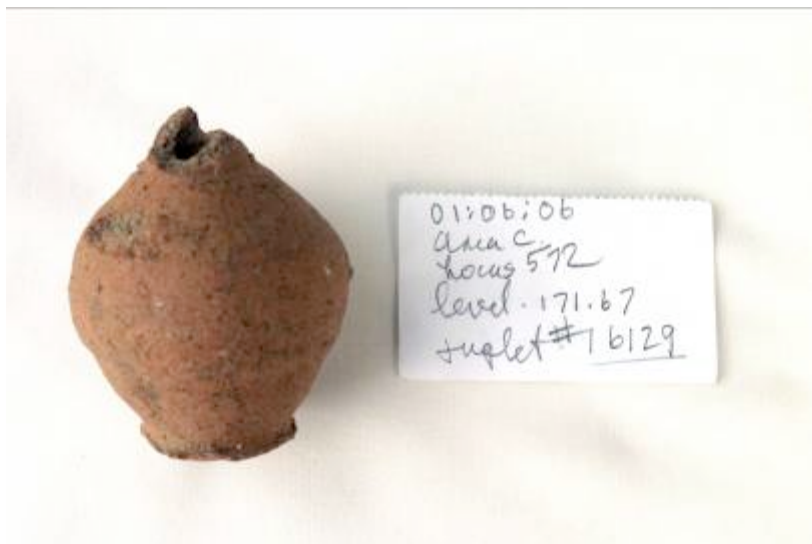
Located at sq. C25 and was aimed to reveal the top soil of wall W661. When this wall was discovered at the end of the day the locus was closed.

Locus 572

Located at sq. C 25-26, at the western end of the courtyard, this locus was rich in finds. Among the pottery finds there was a complete Eretz Yisrael oil lamp, large shards of globular cooking pot, a Hellenistic juglet. ETS shards, an iron nail, a pierced basalt stone, perhaps a weight for fishing, and fragments of green glass.

13-6-06
AREA C
Sq. C25
L 572
B 16138





Finds from Locus 572

Locus 573

This locus is located at square B25 and was excavated in order to expose the southern face of wall W668. Finds were a mixture of EB to Hellenistic period.

Locus 574

Located at sq. D 24, east of a segment of a wall that continues the line of W663 to the north. An opening connects this locus to Locus 569. The nature of this locus is not determined as yet. Among the finds made in this locus there was an almost complete Hellenistic oil lamp, Hellenistic shards, pierced shells served as jewelry and an outstanding silver tetradrachma dating from king Antiochus.



Antiochus tetradrachma; Mint: Tyre.

Locus 5702

This locus is located at sq. BC27 and continues the room excavated to the west. The floor of the room contained many shards of pottery that were taken for reconstruction. Among the finds there were Hellenistic cooking pots with tall neck, basalt spindle whorl, an iron chisel, and round basalt stones used perhaps for grinding.

Locus 1577

This locus is an underground cellar located at sq. C25. The cellar was built by basalt stone walls covered with large basalt slabs. The cellar contained a large number of storage jars.



The wine cellar of Locus 1577,



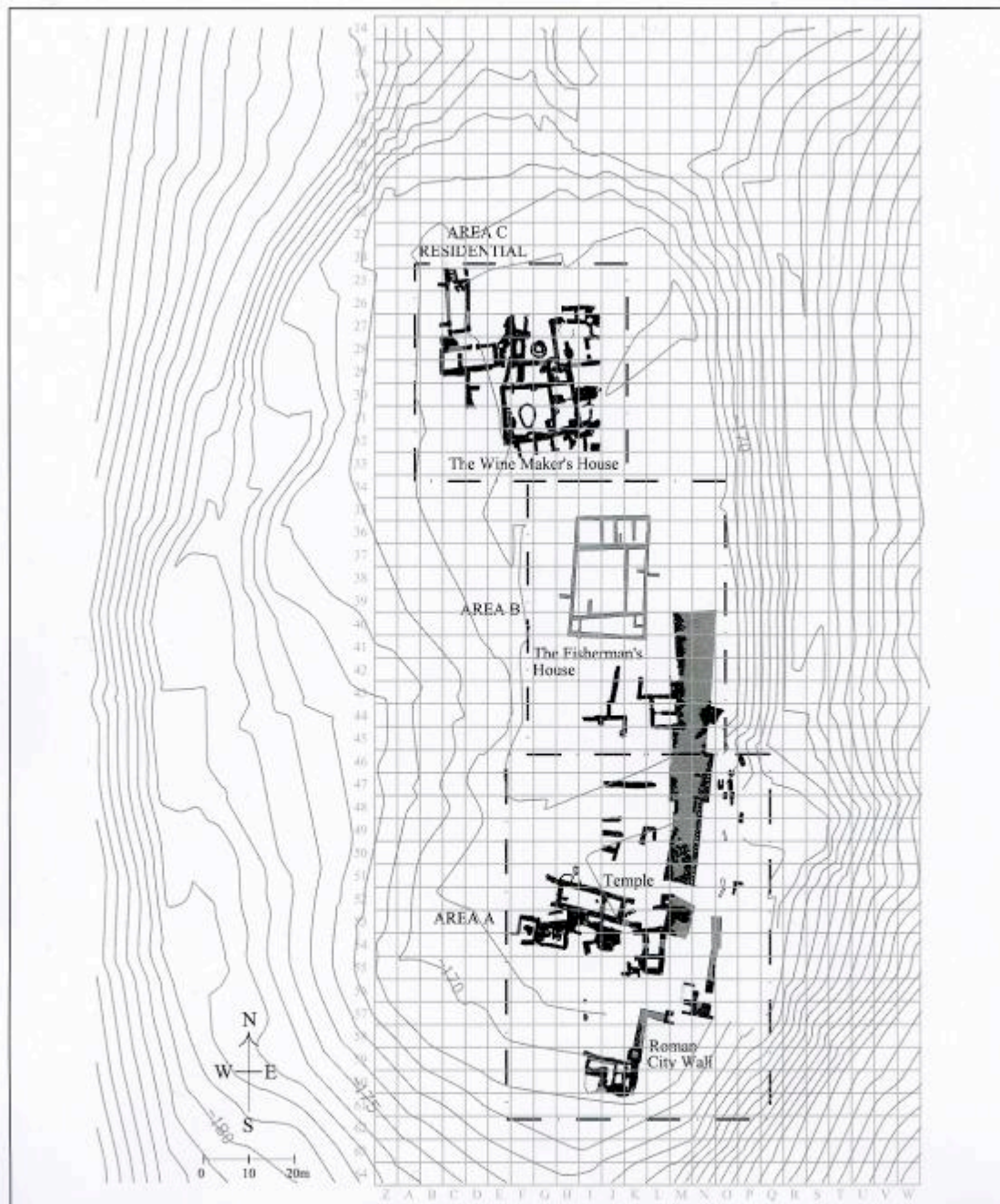
Wine amphora in the cellar



Shards of pottery in situ at the cellar Locus 1577



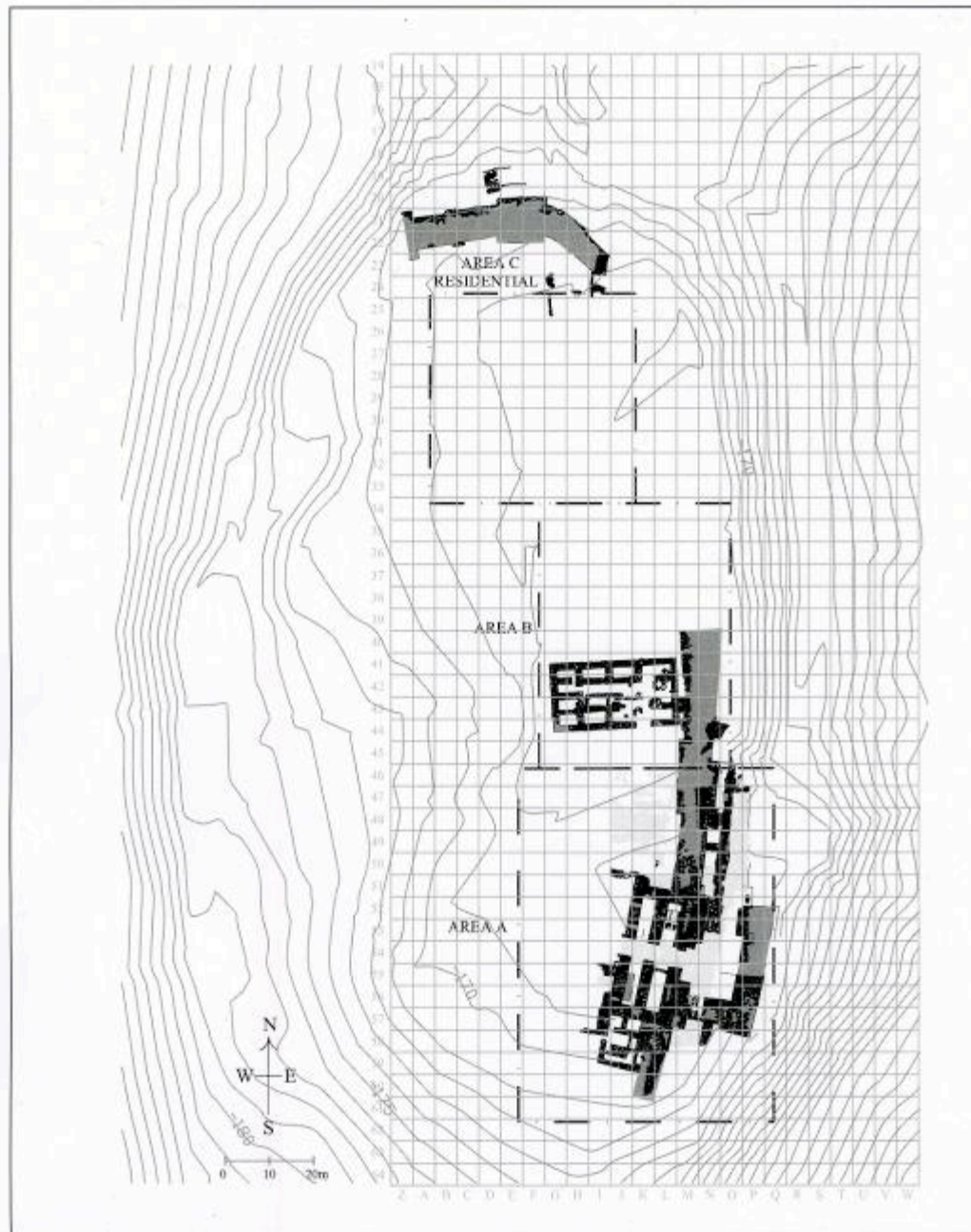
Shards of pottery from the cellar,



BETHSAIDA EXCAVATION PROJECT - 2007
 BETHSAIDA, ISRAEL
 STRATUM 2

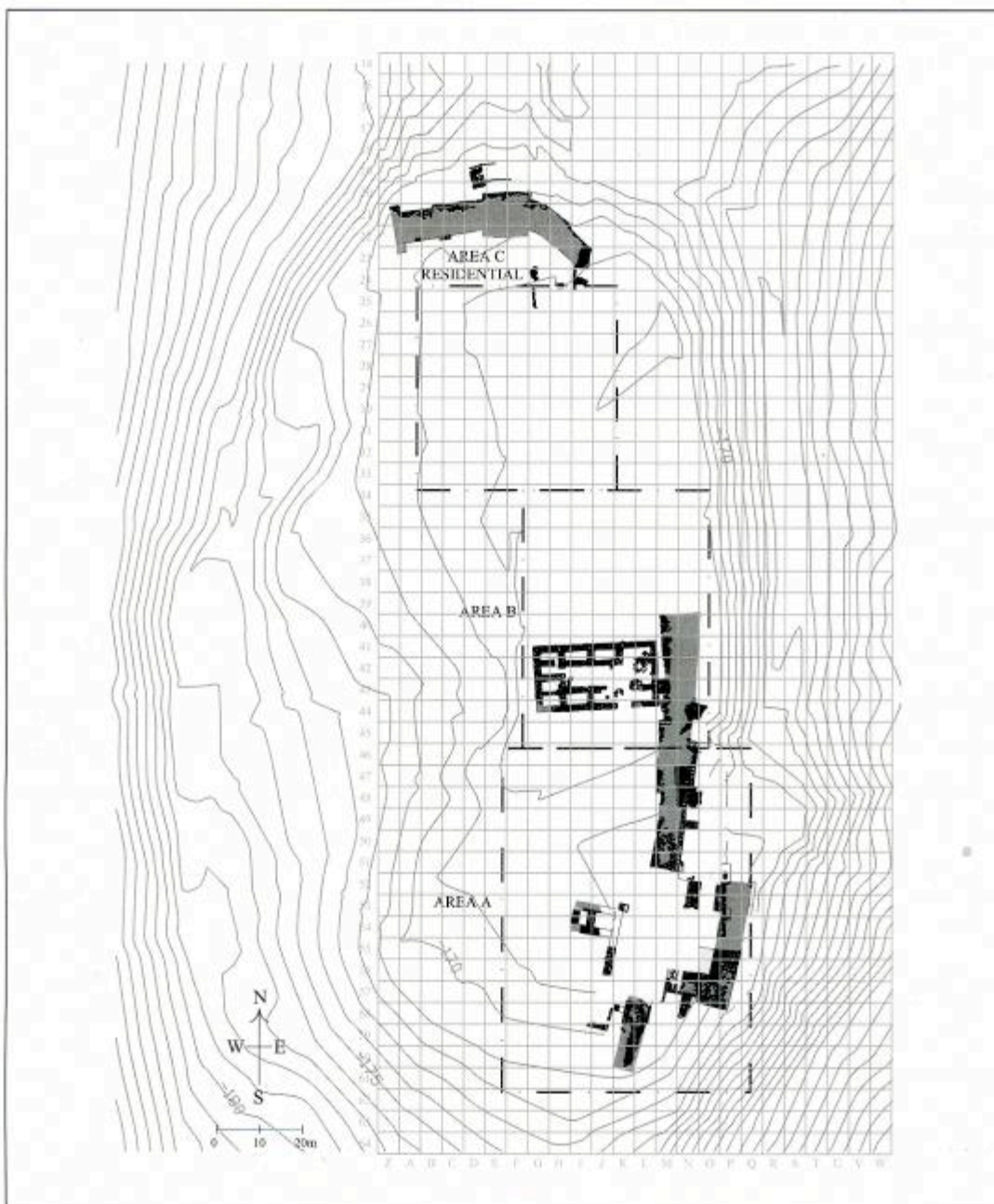


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 STRATUM 5





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